Grenville M. Dodge

Grant's Intelligence Chief in the West

Grenville M. Dodge and George H. Sharpe: Grant's Intelligence Chiefs in West and East

The American Civil War was a turning point in the history of warfare as it was an impetus to the art of intelligence. Both sides found themselves reaping the whirlwind of the industrial age. Troops and their logistical trappings could be sped to the battlefield aboard trains, adding the element of surprise to maneuver. Communications, which had formerly been conducted at the gallop, could now be telegraphed in minutes, and intercepted just as quickly. Rifled barrels imparted a spin to a breech-loaded cartridge that made it accurate at greater distances, making a sustained advance over open ground foolhardy. Repeating rifles that could lay down a deadly rate of fire found their way to the battlefield. Enemy dispositions and preparations could be leisurely noted from the basket of a lighter-than-air balloon.

Generalship would never be the same. As the tools of warfare multiplied, so too did the work of a headquarters. Specialized staff were now required to perform tasks that were before reserved for the general alone. One of the areas that now required some concentrated effort was that of determining the enemy's capabilities and intentions, and concealing your own. With no manuals, textbooks or doctrine to guide them, commanders had to improvise their own intelligence organizations. In different commands in both armies, north and south, the job was entrusted to a staff officer or subordinate commander. There was no base of experience nor any centralized effort at a national level. Sometimes it was handled by a signal officer, a provost marshal, an engineer or an adjutant.

When George B. McClellan took command of the Army of the Potomac, he called upon a railroad detective he had known back in Chicago when both men had worked for the Illinois Central. Allen Pinkerton had shown a skill for spying out those burglary schemes that plagued the railroads. He set up shop in the Provost Marshal's Office, adopting for himself the cover name of Major E. J. Allen.

He employed a net of spies who were able to pass through enemy lines and to this source he added the interrogation of deserters, prisoners, refugees and fugitive slaves. His reports took into account the morale of the enemy, the adequacy of supplies, the state of their dress, food prices in Richmond, and any other indicators of enemy capabilities in addition to how the enemy was armed and in what numbers he was massed. Pinkerton was particularly proud of his sources which claimed to know the exact amount of rations issued to the Confederate Army, thus providing a means of calculating their strength, which invariably inflated his numbers.

Pinkerton and his secret service began telling McClellan that the Confederates facing him were double the strength they actually were and feeding the cautious McClellan's penchant for inaction. The commander of the Army of the Potomac too readily accepted the wildly exaggerated reports of enemy strength because they coincided with his preconceptions about a superior enemy force. By staying on the defensive against a resourceful commander like Robert E. Lee, he turned opportunity into defeat.

By September 1862, two months before his relief, McClellan was turning away from Pinkerton's estimates and relying on cavalry reconnaissance and other spies. But it was too late. He was relieved from command on 4 November and replaced by Ambrose Burnside.

Six days earlier, Pinkerton had reported enemy strength in Lee's army to be 130,000. It was actually 70,000. Pinkerton and his men were better at counter intelligence than they were at pinpointing order-of-battle information. They snagged some southern spies in Washington. The detective also seemed more at home with a political kind of espionage. He was even accused of spying on his former boss for his political enemies after McClellan was relieved of command, a charge which he loudly denied.[1]

By the middle of the Civil War, the dimensions of intelligence work in the industrial age began to be understood—by a railroad man turned soldier in one theater and a lawyer militiaman in the other.

In the Western theater, Ulysses S. Grant benefited from the intelligence savvy of General Grenville M. Dodge. From the time of the final drive on Vicksburg, Grant relied upon Dodge who ran his network from his base command at Corinth.

A civil engineer from Danvers, Massachusetts, Dodge had graduated from Norwich University in 1851, and worked as a surveyor for the Illinois Central. While working for the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad in Iowa City, he got experience building railroads and banking and investing. He organized and was named colonel of an Iowa militia force and led them in Missouri in 1861 and 1862, before being commissioned a brigadier general in March 1862 in the Army of Tennessee. Dodge was considered by his fellow Iowans to be unsoldierly in appearance and a "sickly looking fellow," but by sharing in all the drills and trials of his troops, he won their approbation. One of the lieutenants in the regiment explained, although Dodge "was not a man of very dignified personal presence, we could very easily see that he was a man of a good deal of executive force, a man that, when he went into anything, went in with his whole soul."[2] He came to the attention of Ulysses S. Grant who greatly respected his energy and skill at throwing up rail lines and bridges for his troops. By July 1863, Grant was recommending him for promotion to major general.

When commanding at Rolla, Missouri, Dodge had sent out spies to check rumors reaching General John C. Fremont, commanding the Department of Missouri. So far-ranging and active were they, that they wore out their horses. Dodge solved this problem by keeping men out in the field to collect information in the countryside with which they were most familiar. Those living in enemy-held territory were paid for their services and expenses, although many of them refused payment because their loyalties lay with the Union. Thus was born his scouting units and a secret service that he increasingly relied upon for information. His "Corps of Scouts" was formed from men of the 24th and 25th Missouri regiments. His scouts were credited with supplying the warning of the approach of the Confederate forces of Price and Van Dorn, information that, according to one account, probably saved the Army of the Southwest from a major defeat.[3]

Dodge trained his scouts to determine the numbers of the units they came across and to avoid the exaggeration that was usually attendant upon reporting enemy strength. One method was to measure the length of a column along a road. They became accomplished intelligence operatives and were effective in protecting his railroad-building operations from enemy cavalry harassment.

While in camp at Corinth, he took advantage of the First Tennessee Cavalry, a unit that was composed of southern men who believed in the Union cause. They knew their way around the south and passed with little trouble through Confederate lines. They could also call upon their friends and relatives living there for assistance and safe haven. Dodge also made good use of fugitive or freed slaves who also had freer access to enemy territory. He found them to be unfailingly loyal and knew of no instance when they betrayed a confidence

to the enemy.

Dodge's office had the look of a war room, maps lining the walls with precise order-of-battle and geographical information noted on them. He kept them up to date with incoming reports and used them to gain an overall picture that was invaluable when planning raids or offensives. Knowing the vulnerability of the telegraph to line-tapping, he only used messengers to carry information, and then in a cipher. After incorporating information into his maps or his single communications book, he destroyed any written notes.

While a major general commanding a division in the Vicksburg campaign, he had over 100 agents operating deep in the south, ranging from Mississippi and Georgia to Tennessee and Virginia, under a chief of scouts named L.A. Naron. Another of his legendary spies was Phillip Henson who did such good work scouting out enemy dispositions around Vicksburg in the spring of 1863. For his achievements, Dodge presented him with a prized horse named Black Hawk. He is known to have paid two female agents for their work—Jane Featherstone in Jackson, Mississippi, and Mary Malone who traveled to Meridian, Columbus, Jackson, Okolona and Selma in the summer of 1863. For her work, Malone received $750, probably in captured Confederate money as was the practice.

Dodge brought security consciousness to his work, personally reading the agents' reports and refusing to reveal their names even to his closest staff members and, in one case, to his commander. When his boss, General Stephen A. Hurlbut, insisted upon learning the names of his agents and the details of their operations, Dodge refused, specifying the harm that could befall them if their identities were not protected with the utmost security. Hurlbut, in a huff, cut off funds for his intelligence network and Dodge went over his head to Grant who recognized the value of the intelligence that he was getting from Dodge, and upheld him in this matter of secrecy.[4]

The worth of Dodge's intelligence service was best illustrated in Grant's campaign before Vicksburg. When Grant had to divide his force to meet the threat of an attack on his rear by Joseph H. Johnston, he was aided in knowing, thanks to Dodge's agents, the numbers of the Confederate force were nearer to 30,000 than to the 60,000 that Johnston claimed to have. He was able to achieve an economy of force, sending just the right amount of reinforcements to Sherman. Again, on 16 May 1863, Grant relied on Dodge's intelligence to turn away from Johnston and mass his forces for an attack on Pemberton, driving the southerners back into the city of Vicksburg. To achieve the timely delivery of information, Dodge violated his own rules of communications security and had his agents report directly to Grant. One agent was captured and two were killed while doing so.

Dodge's force was inactivated when Grant went East to command the Federal Army, but many of the men remained under Dodge's command in the XVI Army Corps until the battle of Atlanta in which their general was wounded.[5]

As a result of Dodge's communications security, little is known of his intelligence organization or its efficacy. One of the unit's major successes was the discovery and disruption of Coleman's Scouts, Braxton Bragg's elite secret service unit. They captured its leader Capt. Henry B. Shaw, who was going under the false name of Coleman, and several others, including Samuel Davis who was hanged as a spy after he refused to give information to Dodge's interrogators. While few specific exploits are known, many historians of this period consider him to be one of the best intelligence officers in the Union Army.[6]

Some of the Indians that tried to elude him on the Great Plains after the war would agree with that assessment. In December 1864 Dodge was named by Grant to command the Department of Missouri with headquarters at Saint Louis. His first order of business was to

launch a campaign to quell Cheyenne and Arapahos in the Platte Valley. A major element of his campaign strategy was to use spies, friendly Indians, to report on renegade activities. Having no previous experience with intelligence operations being directed at them, the hostile Indians were completely baffled by Dodge's seeming omniscience concerning their movements. Coupled with his use of a surveyor's transit instrument for surveillance, his intelligence work caused the Indians to attribute to him supernatural powers. They called him "Long Eyes," an appropriate name for an intelligence-minded officer.

Resigning from the Army after relentless Indian campaigning in the West, he became a congressman from Iowa (1866-68) and the chief engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad which at the time was building the first American transcontinental railroad. He supervised construction of the line that traversed the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains from Omaha, Nebraska, to Promontory Point, Utah.

He teamed up with President Grant to invest in a Mexican railroad venture, serving as the vice president. He held top positions in several railroad companies. He was appointed by President William McKinley after the Spanish-American War to chair a commission that was investigating the performance of the War Department during the last conflict. The commission's findings served as the stimulus for military reforms undertaken by Secretary of War Elihu Root, including the establishment of a Second (or intelligence) Division on the general staff in August 1903.[7]

When he took command of the Army of the Potomac, Fighting Joe Hooker could not find at his headquarters a single document that could inform him about the Confederate army that faced him. He said, "There was no means, no organization, and no apparent effort, to obtain such information."[8] In February 1863, Maj. Gen. Hooker plucked from the command of the 120th New York volunteer regiment, a lawyer from upstate, Colonel George Henry Sharpe, to head the Bureau of Military Information, Army of the Potomac. Sharpe probably was selected by Marsena R. Patrick who, before becoming provost marshal general, commanded a brigade in King's division in McDowell's first corps to which Sharpe's New York volunteers belonged. A graduate of Rutgers University, Sharpe studied law at Yale, before practicing in New York city with the firm of Bidwell and Strong. He had worked as the secretary of a U.S. legation to Vienna, Austria, in 1851 and 1852 before returning to his home town of Kingston to practice law.

It was there that he raised a company of volunteers, part of the 20th New York, and led them with the rank of captain in the first battle of Bull Run in July 1861. At the end of his enlistment, he was mustered out and returned to New York to raise another unit, the 120th New York Regiment. It was assigned in August 1862 to McClellan's Army of the Potomac and commanded by the 34-year-old Colonel Sharpe.

Military intelligence took on a more professional look under the lawyer turned colonel who was officially designated Assistant Provost Marshal of the Army of the Potomac. As Chief of the Bureau of Military Information, he provided a more efficient and systematic collection of military information from all sources. Sharpe appointed as his deputy John C. Babcock, a volunteer in the Sturgis Rifles and, after his enlistment expired, a civilian order-of-battle expert with the Topographical Department. It was Babcock who stayed on after Pinkerton resigned to prove that accurate information could be assembled about the enemy's numbers. The records keeper and chief interrogator, he was the continuity in the department and, now as a civilian, he was not subject to being lost when his enlistment expired. Third in command was Captain John C. McEntee from the Ulster Guard. His job was to supervise the penetration operations, sending

George H. Sharpe

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scouts into enemy lines and, along with Babcock, develop the order of battle for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

The bureau employed some 70 "guides" to gather intelligence in the field. Using information collected from their own scouts, from liaison with the cavalry commanders,[9] from southern refugees and deserters, from intercepted communications,[10] from observation stations,[11] from balloon observations,[12] from military patrols, prisoner interrogations, liaison with other commands, and from open sources like newspapers,[13] they were able to write informed and coordinated intelligence summaries for the commander.

Sharpe was well served by competent subordinates like Lieutenant H. B. Smith, the chief detective of the Middle Department, encompassing Maryland, Delaware and part of Virginia, who used his 40-man section to keep a close eye on known sympathizers and potential enemy agents.

Major Henry K. Young ran a team of 30 to 40 scouts who scoured the Shenandoah Valley and caused Phil Sheridan to remark that they "cheerfully go wherever ordered, to obtain that great essential of success, information." That their job was risky was made apparent by their casualties. Ten of their number were killed in the line of duty. Although they worked for Sheridan and not for Sharpe's bureau, the information provided by Young's scouts was used to good effect by Sharpe.[14]

Sharpe also benefited from a wealth of information provided by the Richmond underground, a highly organized and far-reaching spy organization improbably directed by Elizabeth Van Lew, a 44-year-old abolitionist in 1862 and a resident of the southern capitol. Among Van Lew's sources was Mary Bowser, a freed slave who was planted as a housemaid in the home of Jefferson Davis.[15] Another key agent that contributed to Sharpe's success was Samuel Ruth, the superintendent of the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad, who was able to supply excellent information on Confederate troop movements and supply trains. Both Van Lew and Ruth were invaluable during the siege of Petersburg, a campaign that was close enough to Richmond to allow for their reports to be passed quickly through Confederate lines.

The value of the bureau was especially felt during the Chancellorsville campaign, April-May 1863, and during the Confederate advance into Pennsylvania, June-July 1863. Both the Union and Confederate generals were learning lessons about this new intelligence business. One of them was that intelligence had its greatest value before the fight when time was not so critical, allowing commanders to develop strategies, select the battlefield, and mass their forces. But during the battle the importance of intelligence diminished because it could not keep up with the action. It also decreased in importance as it descended the chain of command, being of most benefit to the overall commander but of lesser use to a commander of a company at grips with the enemy. At Chancellorsville, Hooker suffered from a lack of combat intelligence because he had sent his cavalry off on irrelevant missions, although he had good intelligence before the fighting started. As the intelligence bureau gained in experience, it was able to better evaluate its sources as to reliability and give solid information to the commander. As an example of the quality and form of his work, here is one of Sharpe's reports produced on 27 May 1863, just before the Gettysburg campaign.

1. The enemy's line in front of us is much more contracted than during the winter. It extends from Banks' Ford, on a line parallel with the river, to near Moss Neck. Anderson's division is on their left. McLaws' is next, and in rear of Fredericksburg. Early is massed about Hamiltons' Crossing, and Trimble's is directly in the rear of Early. Rodes' (D.H. Hill's old division) is farther to the right, and back from the river, and A. P. Hill is the right of their

line, resting nearly on Moss Neck. Each of these six divisions have five brigades.

2. Pickett's division, of six brigades, has come up from Suffolk, and is at Taylorsville, near Hanover Junction.

3. Hood's division, of four brigades, has also left from the front of Suffolk, and is between Louisa Court-House and Gordonsville.

4. Ten days ago there was in Richmond only the City Battalion, 2,700 strong, commanded by General Elzey.

5. There are three brigades of cavalry 3 miles from Culpeper Court-House, toward Kelly's Ford. They can at present turn out only 4,700 men for duty, but have many dismounted men, and the horses are being constantly and rapidly recruited by the spring growth of grass. These are Fitz. Lee's, William H. Fitzhugh Lee's, and Wade Hampton's brigades.

6. General Jones is still in the Valley, near New Market, with about 1,400 cavalry and twelve pieces of light artillery.

7. Mosby is above Warrenton, with 200 men.

8. The Confederate army is under marching orders, and an order from General Lee was very lately read to the troops, announcing a campaign of long marches and hard fighting, in a part of the country where they would have no railroad transportation.

9. All the deserters say that the idea is very prevalent in the ranks that they are about to move forward upon or above our right flank.

While Freeman called it "correct in nearly every particular," Hooker paid it little attention.[16] By all appearances, Joe Hooker would seem to have been a commander who valued military intelligence. Realizing its lack, he ordered a "secret service" be formed. He was concerned with the prompt delivery of information about the enemy and he demanded accuracy. But in the end, following Chancellorsville, he would seem to have lost his confidence in his intelligence service. Patrick, Sharpe's boss, complained in his diary that even though the bureau had "furnished him with the most astonishingly correct information," Hooker treated it "with indifference." He wrote in June that "we get accurate information, but Hooker will not use it and insults all who differ from him in opinion. He has declared the enemy are over 100,000 strong…which is all false and he knows it." But even Patrick betrayed his own uncertainties when he admitted that his information as to the enemy's whereabouts was "not great and I am fearing that we shall catch a blow in the wrong place."[17]

Under Hooker's successor, George Meade, the intelligence producers would fare no better. Patrick called Meade "a goggle-eyed old snapping turtle," and the dislike was apparently mutual. Meade called the Bureau of Military Information "good for nothing," declaring that it "furnished no information not already received thro' the Cavalry." He recommended that it "be broken up."[18]

Meade, who succeeded Hooker in command of the Army of the Potomac on 28 June 1863, three days before Gettysburg, had good intelligence before the battle, using his cavalry under both Buford and Reynolds to scout out "the nature of the country" and report on the approaching enemy columns. The signal station on Little Round Top was useful in spotting enemy movements but even more noteworthy for its effect on Lee's planning. In order to avoid being seen by the Union signal observers, Lee had to route Longstreet's column in a roundabout way to come upon the Union flank, a maneuver that cost him precious time and maybe the battle.[19]

Not only proving itself as a valuable tool for collecting information on the enemy, Sharpe's bureau also became adept at protecting the Army of the Potomac from Confederate intelligence penetrations. Lee found in the spring of 1863 that security was so tight that had "no means of ascertaining the truth…" about Hooker's dispositions

and intentions. Sharpe's superior, Patrick, boasted that "the rebels have not the slightest idea what we are about today."[20]

Patrick and Sharpe were intent on not only keeping Confederates outside of Union lines, but some Washington bureaucrats as well. Patrick had no love for Col. Lafayette C. Baker who was his counterpart in the War Department who ran a self-styled "Secret Service of the United States." The two men maintained a running feud and Patrick turned away anyone showing up at his headquarters carrying a pass from Baker's office. This was more than petty in-fighting as it insulated Sharpe's bureau from Washington interference.

When Grant took over command of the entire Union Army in March 1864, he took Sharpe along to his staff as his intelligence officer. The bureau remained a part of the Army of the Potomac but Sharpe was still intimately involved with its work. Despite the fact that his most valuable assets were operating behind enemy lines the information never stopped flowing. One historian has noted that "the communications channels became so systematic that when Grant's headquarters needed specific information from inside Richmond, all Grant or his subordinates had to do was ask and it could be obtained." Grant even once referred to certain information as being "from a lady in Richmond."[21]

That Van Lew and Ruth were doing a good job was evident from the complaints of a clerk in the Confederate War Department who recorded in his diary that "The enemy are kept fully informed of everything transpiring here." He told President Jefferson Davis that "there was no ground for hope unless communication with the enemy's country was checked…."[22]

Sometimes they would just get lucky. Based on the interrogation work of a single afternoon, the order of battle of Jubal Early's corps when it descended on the Shenandoah Valley was calculated. According to an eyewitness, the prisoners "all told the same story and stated that they belonged to various regiments, brigades and divisions of Early's corps; had left Lee's army June 13th, and had arrived by rail at Lynchburg on the day before the battle."[23] A windfall of information could be obtained from captured mail sacks and documents found among the ruins of a recently completed battle. Babcock was able to fill all the details of the command of General William E. Jones after a morning report was taken from the general's dead body after the battle of Piedmont.

But all was not good fortune and unrelieved success. The intelligence business carried with it the strong potential for error, contradiction, and uncertainty. The usually reliable Babcock was telling Sharpe that a Confederate division had "positively gone to Wilmington," when Maj. Gen. E. O. C. Ord was telegramming the following day that the division had never left. The problems that were presented by conflicting order-of-battle information were summed by George G. Meade in his message to Grant in July 1864. He complained of an enemy force that "has now been positively placed in our front & on our left & rear & on its way to Pa." As careful as Sharpe was to verify reports from a variety of other sources, false information could taint the picture. An example occurred in March 1965 when Grant amassed a sheaf of reports from different sources that the Confederate cavalry commander Jubal Early had been captured by Phil Sheridan, when Early had, in fact, gotten away.[24]

The Bureau of Military Intelligence was credited, as have most U.S. Army intelligence organizations since, with an intelligence failure during the maneuvering north of Richmond in June 1864 when Jubal Early's Second Corps slipped away undetected to raise havoc in the Shenandoah Valley and even menace the Washington capitol. The reasons for Early getting away unnoticed are several, not the least of which is that Grant pulled the units facing Early out of the line as the sun went down on 12 June to sidestep Lee and move south to the

vicinity of Petersburg. So there was nobody there to see Early pull back at 2:00 a.m. on 13 June. Grant's cavalry was busy masking his own move and not tracking the movements of the enemy.

Then Sharpe had his hands full with Grant's shift in his base of operations to Petersburg. He was shorthanded, with McEntee on temporary duty in the Shenandoah Valley setting up a subsidiary intelligence department there. It was four days before he had time to issue a intelligence summary and it failed to mention Early's whereabouts. Two weeks and 20 intelligence reports later, Sharpe still was not sure of Early's location, and he wrote on 6 July, "Very little is known in their army of the whereabouts of [Early's] corps," and added that "it was reported to be operating in the [Shenandoah] Valley."[25]

This blind spot caused Grant concern and he undertook several improvements in his intelligence organization. With Sharpe taking the lead, he strengthened the system which provided information about Confederate activities in the valley and increased his liaison with the local citizen cells working for him there. News from the valley was relayed with more frequency through regular visits by his scouts, and then relayed to Grant. He kept in closer contact with his nets in Richmond, Van Lew and Ruth. Efficiency was at its peak.

Grant also merged the four separate military departments west of Washington into a single Middle Military Division and put Phil Sheridan at its head, with orders to destroy Early and neutralize the valley as a source of Confederate food and lines of communication. In the campaign that followed in the valley through March 1865, Early's force was eventually destroyed, the fields, barns and mills torched, and the resources of the Shenandoah denied the Confederates. The Bureau of Military Information played a key role in this Union victory, keeping a close watch on the reinforcements Lee was sending and recalling from the valley so that both Grant and Sheridan knew with confidence where to concentrate their forces against Lee. The Union commanders had the advantage of good intelligence that denied their opponent the strategy of maneuver that had worked so well for him up until now.[26] It is the bureau's operations at this time that earned for it the reputation among historians as "the war's most highly developed intelligence organization."[27]

With the war ended, Sharpe received two brevets for his meritorious service, the first to Brigadier General of Volunteers on 20 December 1864, the second to Major General of Volunteers on 13 March 1865. He was given the job of paroling Lee's army after the surrender, one that involved receiving the assurances from each soldier that he would not again take up arms against the United States. He was honorably mustered out on 3 June.[28]

After the war he continued to work for the government in a intelligence capacity, traveling to Europe in 1867 at the behest of Secretary of State William Seward to locate and investigate Americans living there that might have been involved in the Lincoln assassination. He next accepted another assignment from Seward which involved inquiries in Vermont about a plot of Irish nationalists to attack Canada.[29]

Sharpe was made U.S. marshal for the Southern District of New York state by his former commander, and now, in 1870, president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant. He was instrumental in jailing two of the ringleaders in the famed Boss Tweed political machine involved in rigging elections. Other government work followed as the Surveyor of the Port of New York, and a ministerial post as a trade commissioner for Central and South America.[30]

He embarked on a career in state politics when he was elected as an assemblyman, serving from 1879 to 1883. For one year of that term he was assembly speaker. He finished his public career in 1899 as a member of the board of the United States General Appraisers, a

position he held for nine years. He died in January 1900.[31]

Sharpe's Bureau of Information was the first case in the U.S. Army of a modern military intelligence organization, comparing intelligence from a number of sources and evaluating it before passing it along. A leading historian on civil war intelligence, Edwin Fishel, concluded that "the bureau supplied Fighting' Joe with incredibly accurate information that made possible his unexampled march to Lee's rear at Chancellorsville, it provided critical information in the Gettysburg campaign that has always been credited to other sources, and it performed with similar effectiveness under Grant when he came East. Its reputation spread until it began to get requests for information from other theaters." Commenting on the substance of the bureau's information, he found that "Sharpe's reports resembled Pinkerton's about as much as Hooker's personality resembled McClellan's."[32] About the bureau's effectiveness, Douglas Southall Freeman wrote that during Hooker's tenure:

> For the first time on Virginia soil, thanks to the improvement in the Union cavalry and in the intelligence service of the Army of the Potomac, the Federals knew more of what was happening on the south side of the Rappahannock than Lee knew of what was taking place north of the river.[33]

It would seem that the U.S. Army had realized the importance of the intelligence function and the necessity of having it performed by a distinct unit of specialists. But at war's end, the bureau was disbanded and its members returned to civilian life. The lesson about the key role intelligence could play would have to be relearned, the next time by young officers in the decades to come who studied European armies seeking a more professional U.S. Army.

Notes

1. Sears, Stephen W., *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon*, Ticknor and Fields, New York, 1988, pp. 107-9, 179, 273, 337, 347.

2. Hirshon, Stanley P., *Grenville M. Dodge: Soldier, Politician, Railroad Pioneer*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1967, p. 48.

3. Hirshon, p. 67.

4. Maslowski, Peter, "Military Intelligence Sources During the American Civil War: A Case Study," in *The Intelligence Revolution: A Historical Perspective*, Proceedings of the Thirteenth Military History Symposium, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 12-14, 1988, edited by Lt. Col. Walter T. Hitchcock, USAF, published by Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, Washington, D.C., 1991, p. 40.

5. Hirshon, pp. 67-9, 74-5, 80-4, 92, 99, 115, 117.

6. O'Toole, G. J. A., *Encyclopedia of American Intelligence and Espionage*, Facts on File, New York, 1988, pp. 162-3.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Luvaas, Jay, "The Role of Intelligence in the Chancellorsville Campaign, April-May 1863," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1990, p. 101.

9. In the American Civil War the principal intelligence gathering arm of the U.S. Army was the cavalry. Early in the war, however, they could not be said to live up to the present-day motto of the Military Intelligence Corps, "Always Out Front." Rather the cavalry seldom ventured very far from its infantry and artillery support. Its sorties were marked by timidity, and therefore its usefulness as

the eyes of the army was hooded. That is until the arrival upon the scene of a "Man on Horseback"—Brig. Gen. John Buford.

Buford recognized that the Union cavalry was no match for the better mounted Confederate cavalry. He also knew that the use of horsemen as shock troops with sabers drawn was a thing of the past. Massed formations of cavalry only made big targets for the more accurate, farther ranging and more rapid-firing rifle. Instead he called upon his Indian-fighting experience and used the cavalry like dragoons. The horse offered mobility, but when it came to fighting he dismounted the troops and had them seek cover. In this way he was able to repel charge after charge of Confederates in the saddle. This meant that Buford could keep his cavalry out on reconnaissance without fear of being beaten off by the enemy. This he did tenaciously, taking many important prisoners and gathering some very useful intelligence information such as a letter from Lee outlining his plan for the campaign found in the pocket of J.E.B. Stuart's adjutant.

10. During the Civil War the U.S. Army began using the telegraph, not only to link major headquarters, but tactically, in the form of the "Flying Telegraph." This was the name given to the Beardslee magneto-electric telegraph set, the American army's first electric weapon. It was portable, hand-operated, without batteries, and could signal over several miles of insulated field wire. For the first time the U.S. Army had an electronic Command, Control and Communications (C3) system. And, for the first time, telegraph lines were tapped and messages intercepted.

Captain Anson Stager, head of the Military Telegraph Service, established in 1861, developed a routine transposition cryptosystem to provide an elementary safeguard against wiretapping. It scrambled the words of a message according to a prearranged pattern and, although far from sophisticated, it defied Confederate decryption, at least according to employees of the Military Telegraph Service.

The Federals on the other hand had little trouble with the Confederates' Vigenere polyalphabetic substitution system, owing to their habit of only partially encrypting the messages and leaving substantial plaintext clues. The possibility of using the vulnerable telegraph to send misleading messages was not lost on either side, and both made good use of disinformation.

11. During the Civil War the Signal Corps manned signal stations on high ground, not only to accomplish visual signalling, but to observe enemy movements. The Union's signal officer, Maj. Albert Myer explained their importance: "If there is a commanding peak near where the enemy offer battle, signal officers should be hurried to it in advance of the army. The enemy are to be kept constantly in view…[for] the knowledge to be gained by witnessing…the formation of their forces, by estimating their strength…and by witnessing early what preparations are made for the battle may be invaluable." [Luvaas, Jay, "The Role of Intelligence in the Chancellorsville Campaign, April-May 1863," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1990, pp. 104.]

12. It was during the Civil War that the Army Signal Corps first began attempting aerial surveillance from lighter-than-air balloons overlooking enemy lines. (During the Mexican War a civilian balloonist suggested their use, but the idea was rejected as impracticable.) Thaddeus S. C. Lowe, a 28-year-old New Hampshire meteorologist, demonstrated the usefulness of balloons as observation platforms to President Lincoln in 1861 when he sent the first air-to-ground telegraph message. The president authorized the formation of an Army Balloon Corps with Professor Lowe, commissioned a captain, at its head. By the end of 1861, Lowe had a fleet of seven balloons and nine *aeronauts* to man them. It was at the time of the Civil War that photography was introduced as a means of recording military information. Thaddeus Lowe had used cameras to take pic-

tures from the basket of his balloon.

In March 1862 with McClellan's Army of the Potomac facing Confederate positions at Yorktown, Lowe took Brig. Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman, one of the corps commanders, aloft and described the intelligence value of the observation flight:

The entire great fortress was ablaze with bonfires, and the greatest activity prevailed, which was not visible except from the balloon. At first the general was puzzled on seeing more wagons entering the forts than were going out, but when I called his attention to the fact that the ingoing wagons were light and moved rapidly (the wheels being visible as they passed each camp-fire), while the outgoing wagons were heavily loaded and moved slowly, there was no longer any doubt as to the object of the Confederates.

It was one of the earliest recorded instances of an intelligence analyst keeping the commander informed. But the value of Lowe's observations were deemed marginal by most commanders. Little could be seen from great distances, especially when the enemy's positions took advantage of foliage cover. In the consignment of blame which followed the Chancellorsville campaign, Hooker blamed the observation balloons for failing to give him information as the enemy's movements, while at the same time the Confederates leaders were bemoaning the fact that they did not possess them and the decided advantage they would provide. It was an example of the commander failing to accept new technology without patiently giving it a chance to prove itself. Hooker called for the discontinuance of the Balloon Corps. Lowe's salary was cut from $10 per day to six, roughly the equivalent of an Army colonel, an insult in Lowe's mind. He resigned in protest and the balloon corps was deactivated in April 1863. Unlike Lowe who was receiving a cut in pay, about half of Sharpe's 70 men, the most he had on the rolls at any one time, were getting pay raises for their good work.

13. A good example of this kind of open source intelligence occurred in April 1863 prior to the Chancellorsville campaign. A Washington newspaper, *The Morning Chronicle*, published a letter from the Union army's medical director to Hooker which gave statistics about the sickness rate per thousand men. These figures allowed Lee to calculate the precise number of men available for duty in Hooker's army. The general often responded to these kind of leaks by banishing newspaper correspondents from his front.

14. Lord, Francis A., *They Fought for the Union*, The Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, PA, 1960, pp. 133-35.

15. Edwin C. Fishel [in "Myths That Never Die," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 2 (Spring 1988):27-58] finds it incredulous that Van Lew, well known in Richmond to be a Union sympathizer, was able to place her former slave, educated in the north, in the Confederate White House, especially since there is no documentation to support this probable historical invention.

16. Freeman, Douglas Southall, *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, New York, 1934-35, Vol. III of III, p. 24.

17. Sparks, p. 379-80.

18. Sparks, p. 382.

19. Luvaas, Jay, "Lee at Gettysburg: A General Without Intelligence," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1990, pp. 131-2.

20. Sparks, David S., "General Patrick's Progress: Intelligence and Security in the Army of the Potomac," *Civil War History,* Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio, 1964, pp. 379.

21. Maslowski, Peter, "Military Intelligence Sources During the

American Civil War: A Case Study," in *The Intelligence Revolution: A Historical Perspective*, Proceedings of the Thirteenth Military History Symposium, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 12-14, 1988, edited by Lt. Col. Walter T. Hitchcock, USAF, published by Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, Washington, D.C., 1991, p. 43.

22. Quoted in Maslowski, p. 44.

23. Lord, p. 134.

24. Maslowski, p. 58.

25. Feis, William B., "A Union Military Intelligence Failure: Jubal Early's Raid, June 12-July 14, 1864," *Civil War History*, September 1990, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 209-225.

26. Feis, William B., "Neutralizing the Valley: The Role of Military Intelligence in the Defeat of Jubal Early's Army of the Valley, 1864-1865," *Civil War History*, September 1993, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 199-215.

27. Feis, Jubal Early's Raid, p. 211.

28. Heitman, Vol. 1, p. 877.

29. O'Toole, G.J.A., *The Encyclopedia of American Intelligence and Espionage: From the Revolutionary War to the Present*, Facts on File, New York, 1988, pp. 420-21.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Fishel, p. 41.

33. Freeman, p. 24.